

divergence certainly did not escape the notice of the Egyptians themselves, and some of them apparently attempted successfully to correct It. Thus we are told that the Theban priests, who particularly excelled in astronomy, were acquainted with the true length of the solar year, and harmonized the calendar with it by intercalating a day every few, probably every four, years.<sup>1</sup> But this scientific improvement was too deeply opposed to the religious conservatism of the Egyptian nature to win general acceptance. "The Egyptians," said Geminus, a Greek astronomer writing about 77 B.C., "are of an opposite opinion and purpose from the Greeks. For they neither reckon the years by the sun nor the months and days by the moon, but they observe a peculiar system of their own. They wish, in fact, that the sacrifices should not always be offered to the gods at the same time of the year, but that they should pass through all the seasons of the year, so that the summer festival should in time be celebrated in winter, in autumn, and in spring. For that purpose they employ a year of three hundred and sixty-five days, composed of twelve months of thirty days each, with five supplementary days added. But they do not add the quarter of a day for the reason I have given—namely, in order that their festivals may revolve."<sup>2</sup> So attached, indeed, were the Egyptians to their old calendar, that the kings at their consecration were led by the priest of Isis at Memphis into the holy of holies, and there made to swear that they would maintain the year of three hundred and sixty-five days without

### Intercalation.<sup>3</sup>

The practical inconvenience of a calendar which marked true time only once in about fifteen hundred years might be

<sup>1</sup> Diodorus Siculus, i. 50. 2 ; Strabo, writer further (p. 108) describes as a xvii. i. 46, p. 816. According to H. popular Greek error the opinion that Brugsch (*Die Agyptologie*, pp. 349 the Egyptian festival of Isis coincided \$q\$.), the Egyptians would seem to have with the winter solstice. In his day, denoted the movable year of the he tells us, the two events were calendar and the fixed year of the sun separated by an interval of a full month, by different written symbols. For more . though they had coincided a hundred evidence that they were acquainted and twenty years before the time he with a four years' period, corrected by was writing. intercalation, see R. Lepsius, *Chrono-<sup>3</sup> Scholia in Caesaris Germanici logie der Aegypter*, i. 149 sqq. Aratea, p. 409, ed. Fr. Eyssenhardt,

<sup>2</sup> Geminus, *Ekmenta Astronomiae*, in his edition of Martianus Capella 8, p. 106, ed. C. Manitius. The same (Leipsic, 1866).